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INFO RUEHDH/AMCONSUL DHAHRAN PRIORITY 0177
RUEHJI/AMCONSUL JEDDAH PRIORITY 0270
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DOE TO POLICY INTERNATIONAL A/S DAVID SANDALOW FOR
SECRETARY CHU FROM AMBASSADOR RICHARD ERDMAN
STATE FOR NEA/FO, NEA/ARP, EEB/ESC/IEC, AND R STAFF

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EPET](#) [OVIP](#) [PREL](#) [SA](#)

SUBJECT: DOE PARTICIPATION AT THE KAUST OPENING CEREMONY

Mr. Secretary:

When I met with Saudi Petroleum Minister Naimi earlier this month, he asked me to personally reaffirm his standing invitation to you to visit the Kingdom and to convey his hopes that you will be able to attend the September 23 inauguration ceremony for the King Abdullah University for Science and Technology (KAUST). As you may know, KAUST is a \$9 billion project that aims to be a world-class center for advanced scientific research. A self-contained community with state-of-the-art facilities and equipment and an ample endowment from the King, KAUST has been able to attract top scholars and researchers from around the world, including from leading institutions like Stanford and MIT, and is viewed as King Abdullah's legacy project. With good reason, given its visionary scope, resources, and promise.

Given important U.S. equities with Saudi Arabia and the King's personal involvement and financing of this massive project, appropriate high-level U.S. participation in the event is essential. In addition, DOE itself has several important equities related to the project. Namely:

--ARAMCO and the Petroleum Ministry have been given the lead by the King to oversee the realization of this project. Your participation would thus be seen as a very positive gesture and would help reinforce our long-standing partnership on energy issues with these two premier institutions in the Kingdom.

--Minister Naimi is strongly interested in DOE participation/involvement in KAUST research projects. In this regard, when we met, Naimi said he has tasked KAUST with three specific missions -- meeting the Kingdom's power needs with solar power within ten years; developing wheat strains that can be grown in brackish or salty water; and transforming algae into bio-fuel. There may be some areas of mutual interest here worth exploring.

--Your participation in the event would provide an opportunity to help cement DOE's important cooperation with the Ministry of Interior (MOI). Under the auspices of our Technical Cooperative Agreement, DOE has signed a project-specific agreement with the MOI. Under this agreement, the Saudi Government is paying DOE \$15.7 million per year to conduct a system effectiveness analysis assessment for the protection of critical infrastructure. Our cooperation in this sensitive area of Saudi national security has created a special relationship between DOE and the MOI, arguably the most powerful institution in the country apart from ARAMCO and the Petroleum Ministry. The MOI leadership, in particular Assistant Minister (and son of the minister) Prince Mohammed bin Naif, has specifically told

us he hopes you will be able to attend the event and looks forward to meeting with you.

Mr. Secretary, I would strongly encourage you to accept Minister Naimi's personal invitation to attend the KAUST inaugural ceremonies if you possibly can. Doing so will advance our bilateral relations by showing respect for the King and his legacy project, provide an opportunity for serious discussions with key leaders in the energy and research sector, and cement DOE cooperation with the MOI in a vital area of Saudi national Security. Should your schedule not permit a visit at this time, we would of course welcome your asking Deputy Secretary Poneman to attend on your behalf. Whoever comes, be assured Embassy Riyadh and our Consulate General in Jeddah stand ready to provide their full support to ensure and successful, interesting, and worthwhile visit.

Sincerely,

Ambassador Richard Erdman

ERDMAN